

August 14, 1981

Dear Light-Duty Manufacturer:

In my letter to light-duty manufacturers dated June 4, 1981, I requested comments concerning a contemplated change to the evaporative emission test procedures employed by our laboratory. This change, which was proposed by General Motors (GM), would establish a limit on the temperature of preconditioning fuel to that of the prevailing daily ambient room temperature, defined as being within the range of 68-86 F. While we did not feel that GM showed any particular harm from EPA's traditional practices of using lower temperature preconditioning fuel, we agreed with GM's argument that such a change would better reflect actual, in-use vehicles.

I received two responses to the request for comments. The only significant comment was a request to define the room temperature at a much tighter limit of 76-86 F. Because the average ambient room temperature at our laboratory is generally maintained at 78 F, allowing some latitude in our laboratory testing temperature would reduce the number of potentially voided tests without defeating the purpose of the temperature limitation. In rejecting this request, we anticipate the potential for laboratory test variability will be reduced significantly while still assuring that the test procedure is more representative of ill-use conditions.

In the absence of any objection to this practice, I plan to request our Engineering Operations Division to ensure that all gasoline-fueled vehicles receive preconditioning fuel which is at room temperature rather than the colder underground fuel. Our laboratory will inform you of this change implementation through an Equipment/procedure Change Notice (EPCN) when they have completed the necessary fuel system modifications. The laboratory has informed me that this could be implemented during August 1981.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the development of this improvement to the testing procedure.

Sincerely yours,

Robert E. Maxwell, Director  
Certification Division  
Mobile Source Air Pollution Control

DATE: August 10, 1981

SUBJECT: Fuel Economy Labeling Policy Change

FROM: Robert E. Maxwell, Director  
Certification Division

TO: Edward F. Tuerk, Director (ANR-443)  
Office of Program Management Operations

Laszlo H. Bockh, Acting Director  
Mobile Source Air Pollution Control

I have attached a copy of a letter which I have sent to the light-duty portion of the automotive industry. This letter notifies them of a change in fuel economy labeling policy which is effective immediately.

This change in policy was necessitated by a General Motors Corporation running change. Under existing policies and regulations, vehicles expected by the running change would have been fuel economy labeled with fuel economy estimates significantly higher than normally expected. At General Motors' request, we developed the policy revision described in the attached letter. Since production of the affected vehicles was imminent, we implemented this policy on July 21, 1981 under the emergency provisions of Section 8.A.1 of Executive Order No. 12291. The normal time required to receive OMB clearance could have, according to GM, severely disrupted their production plans.

However, to the extent practicable, we did informally coordinate this policy with OMB and believe they understand and concur with our action. I recommend that a copy of the attached letter be forwarded to OMB for their information.

Also discussed in the attached letter is a possible generalization in the policy change which would allow manufacturers even greater flexibility to relabel their vehicles. Such a general policy would allow a manufacturer to relabel vehicles in situations similar but not identical to the General Motors' situation. Implementation of this general policy would eliminate the need for handling on a case-by-case basis and potentially as an emergency situation, problems of the type brought out by General Motors. At this time, we are asking industry input as to the advisability and usefulness of such a potential revision in policy. If industry comment is favorable and our further analysis continues to support the desirability of this policy change, we will request OMB clearance via the normal process prior to implementing this more general policy.

Attachment